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Communication from Professor Hilprecht

In accordance with the action taken by the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis at its last meeting in Philadelphia, given in full below, Professor Hilprecht's reply to the Society through its Corresponding Secretary is published herewith.

807 SPRUCE STREET,
PHILADELPHIA, JANUARY 15, 1908.

PROFESSOR JULIUS A. BEWER, *Corresponding Secretary of the "Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis," Union Theological Seminary, 700 Park Avenue, New York.*

DEAR SIR: I acknowledge receipt of your letter of January 4, 1908, advising me that at a meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, held in this city on December 31, 1907, the following preamble and resolution were adopted:

"WHEREAS charges reflecting on American Oriental scholarship have been made against Professor H. V. Hilprecht:

"RESOLVED, That this Society shares the desire expressed by a number of American Orientalists that a complete reply to these charges be made in the *Journal* of this Society or elsewhere."

I have the honor to enclose a copy of a communication, and of its enclosures, which I have to-day sent to Professor Charles R. Lanman, touching upon the expressed desire of a number of American Orientalists in which your Society shares, and I trust this will evidence my intention to make complete reply to the charges made against me.

The intended publication will be so large that it would be an undue trespass upon the columns of the *Journal* of your Society to make it therein. I shall, however, appreciate it if you will cause the insertion in your *Journal* of this letter and all its enclosures in full.

Yours truly,

(Signed)

H. V. HILPRECHT.

807 SPRUCE STREET,
PHILADELPHIA, January 15, 1908.

PROFESSOR CHARLES R. LANMAN,
9 Farrar Street, Cambridge, Mass.

DEAR PROFESSOR LANMAN: Referring to the letter addressed to me, dated April 18, 1906, by sixteen American Orientalists (sent to me with your note dated April 25, 1906), published, with my reply of April 27, 1906, and an introductory note by you in the October, 1907, issue of *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, I enclose herewith copies of the following:

1. My letter to the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, dated January 6, 1908, urging the full publication of all data in their possession and mine bearing upon the "Peters-Hilprecht Controversy."

2. Letter to me dated January 8, 1908, embodying the minute of the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania approving of the full publication by me.

The report on the "Peters-Hilprecht Controversy" to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, by their special committee, dated June 26, 1905, gave only a slight indication of the mass of material presented during the course of its investigation, but it is my intention as speedily as possible to publish all the matter, as indicated in my letter to the Trustees, in a manner which I hope you and all your colleagues will consider "full and frank," and which will make it readily accessible to every one interested in the controversy. My plans for the publication not being as yet fully matured, I am unable at this time to name a definite date of issue, but I believe it will be within two or at most three months. Surely I, more than any one else, am now interested in not delaying the publication, and the enclosed statement (3) covering a summary of Dr. Peters' original suggestions as to the method of the investigation and of my comment thereon, indicate that from the first (January, 1905) I have not been an advocate of secrecy.

Possibly it may later seem to me of advantage in clearing up this matter, to request a committee of your "sixteen" to come here to look into the methods employed in dealing with the material from the Temple Library at Nippur possessed by the University of Pennsylvania.

Kindly acquaint your fifteen colleagues with the contents of this communication and its enclosures, and may I not expect, as a matter of simple justice to me, that you will request the publi-

cation in full of all I send you in the next issue of *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*.

Faithfully yours,

H. V. HILPRECHT.

(Three enclosures.)

January 6, 1908.

To the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania.

GENTLEMEN: In view of the continued public and private agitation, both against the University and the undersigned head of its Assyriological section, upon the subject of the so-called "Peters-Hilprecht Controversy," as evidenced in part by the letter addressed to me April 18, 1906, by sixteen American Orientalists, and published with my reply and an introductory note in *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, October, 1907 (vol. xxiv, no. 1, pp. 92-94 — copy submitted herewith), and by the preamble and resolution adopted on December 31, 1907, in this city by "The Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis," an official copy of which sent by its Corresponding Secretary has just reached me to-day (a copy of which is enclosed), I respectfully submit that it is my conviction that the report of your committee as made public in 1905 has not been generally accepted as satisfactory, because your proceedings were conducted in private, and you have not made public the "pleadings" and testimony upon which it rests.

I am further convinced that our absolute silence in the face of the continued attacks against me, and through me, against the University, is producing increasingly serious injury to the reputation of the University, as I know it is doing to my reputation as a scholar and a man, and I feel that the suffering and constant mental strain to which I have been for more than two years subjected, by reason of the continued malicious attacks and insinuations against me, cannot be longer endured by me in silence with a preservation of my self-respect. I therefore respectfully request that you either —

1. Cause the publication of all the correspondence, documents, and evidence bearing upon this matter, presented before and during the investigation conducted by your committee in the year 1905, together with extracts from vol. xx of Series A of *The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania*, reviews and critiques thereon, and correspondence in your possession and mine, both before and since 1905, bearing upon the controversy, or —

2. Cause to be published all or such portions of the record of

your committee of investigation as you may deem proper, with permission to me to personally make publication of all material bearing upon the matter, as above indicated, of which you did not make use, in a personal supplemental statement to be issued by me relating to the matter, or —

3. Permit me personally to make the entire publication and furnish me with that portion of the data possessed by you alone.

Very respectfully yours,

(Signed)

H. V. HILPRECHT.

While appreciating that you may not be in a position to determine at once how this matter must be treated as to the details, permit me to add that to me it seems necessary that you forthwith make public announcement (or permit me to do so), that publication of the full details of this matter will be made as speedily as possible.

H. V. H.

1/7/08.

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
700 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK, January 4, 1908.

PROFESSOR H. V. HILPRECHT,
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.

DEAR SIR: At a meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, held in Philadelphia, December 31, 1907, the following preamble and resolution were adopted:

"WHEREAS charges reflecting on American Oriental scholarship have been made against Professor H. V. Hilprecht:

"RESOLVED, That this Society shares the desire expressed by a number of American Orientalists that a complete reply to these charges be made in the *Journal* of this Society or elsewhere."

Yours truly,

(Signed)

JULIUS A. BEWER,
Corresponding Secretary.

PHILADELPHIA, January 15, 1908.

Document No. 3, accompanying letter to Professor Charles R. Lanman, Cambridge, Mass., dated January 15, 1908.

Dr. John P. Peters, in presenting (by means of two documents, one dated January 11, 1905, and one undated, but sent to Philadelphia shortly prior to that date) his "suspicions" or charges against me, suggested that the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania conduct "a full investigation, and one which goes beyond the mere asking Professor Hilprecht about these mistakes," by making use of the knowledge and abilities of members of their staff, namely, Messrs. Fisher, Clay, Ranke, and Jastrow.

He further stated that to his surprise the subject-matter of his communications was already more widely known than he had supposed, "and the very worst is believed"; that a proposition had been made to publish the whole matter at a meeting held in Boston at the end of December, 1904, and publish it in the papers. This he had opposed, urging the "asking for an investigation on the part of the trustees."

Dr. Peters continued, "I believe that it must be a thorough and searching investigation, but in the best interest of science, as well as of the University, if such an investigation is made, it should not be published. Such publication would be a great scandal and would only do injury," adding, "I am doing everything in my power to prevent it from being published, or to prevent an unfair and unjust judgment being made in advance."

The two documents above referred to were placed in my hands, with the request to answer them, about January 20, 1905, and in returning them on January 24, 1905, I made to the Provost of the University the following requests:—

"1. That at your earliest convenience you call an extra session of the entire Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, before which both the Rev. Dr. John P. Peters, as my accuser, and I, as defendant, be summoned.

"2. That the two documents referred to above, in their present form, be read in the presence of the entire assembly.

"3. That in addition the Rev. Dr. John P. Peters be asked to explain what precisely he means by these charges preferred against me, and that a stenographical record be kept of his answers.

"4. That I then be authorized to answer these charges in the presence of this entire assembly, and that a stenographical record be kept also of my answers.

"5. That afterwards both the Rev. Dr. John P. Peters and I be informed in writing of the charges, answers, and findings in this case by the Board of Trustees.

"6. That, contrary to the threefold proposal of the Rev. Dr. John P. Peters, on p. 4 of his letter of January 11, referred to above ('to prevent publication'), the results as obtained by the Board, be given the widest publicity, and in order to protect me against similar attacks hinted at in Dr. Peters's letter, I, in particular, be allowed to publish—

"a) The two documents of said Rev. Dr. John P. Peters,

"b) The stenographical records of his and my answers,

"c) The result of the investigation by your Board."

(Signed)

H. V. HILPRECHT.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
COLLEGE HALL, UNIVERSITY, PHILADELPHIA, 1/8/1908.

DEAR PROFESSOR HILPRECHT: I am instructed by the Trustees of the University to acknowledge the receipt of your letter to them, which was received on January 7, a few hours before the stated meeting of the Corporation.

Your letter was read to the Board, and I was instructed to send you a copy of the Minute showing the action thereupon taken. It is as follows:

"A communication from Professor Hilprecht, dated January 6, 1908, upon the subject-matter of the so-called 'Peters-Hilprecht Controversy,' having been submitted to the Board, it was, after a full consideration of the subject,

"RESOLVED, That the Board approved of Professor Hilprecht's proposal to publish the entire correspondence, documents, and evidence bearing upon the question, and that any information in the possession of the University which he may call for be furnished to him."

Very respectfully yours,

EDWARD ROBINS,
Assistant Secretary.

TO PROFESSOR H. V. HILPRECHT,
807 Spruce Street, Philadelphia.